

COUNTRY: France

298

CIA

SUBJECT: Probability of EDC Ratification

Date 17 Jan 54

PLACE ACQUIRED: Paris

DATE ACQUIRED: 25X1X6

DATE OF INFORMATION: 25X1X6

Source: US citizen.

25X1X6
25X1X6

1. From conversations with French journalists and politicians I concluded that the three major factors which will influence the French Government in favor of ratification of the EDC legislation are (1) internal economic stresses, (2) pressure from the Benelux countries, (3) the burden of the Indochinese war.
2. All of the people to whom I talked concede that the French economy is in frightful shape and that a total collapse is imminent unless something is done to change the present course. EDC will, the French believe, bring economic benefits both in the form of direct spending by the US and in the form of increased trade with Germany and the countries to the north. The French are, of course, generally opposed to the rearmament of Germany but the people seem to have reached the point of being willing to swallow that pill in the hope of achieving at least a partial cure of France's economic ills. They are also appalled at the prospect that a military government of France may follow an economic collapse. They remember the privations they suffered during the occupation while Petain was in charge in Vichy and they want no part of a government headed by the military.
3. The representatives of the Benelux countries have tried to exert what pressure they could on the French government in order to procure the ratification of EDC. The Benelux representatives have argued that the abolition of trade barriers will follow ratification and that the coal, steel and heavy machinery industries of France will benefit greatly from such abolition. The Benelux arguments have undoubtedly had some effect, but just how great an effect it is difficult to determine.
4. The Indochinese war is an enormous drain not only on the French economy but on her man-power reserves. A member of the French government told me that French casualties in Indochina have exceeded those suffered by the US in Korea and that the losses had been exceptionally heavy among the junior officers. He said that the military training schools were unable to turn out officers fast enough to replace those lost in combat. The ratification of EDC will not, of course, automatically end the Indochinese war, but the French believe that joining the EDC will place France in a better bargaining position and that with the aid of her allies she may be able to force or negotiate an end of the fighting.
5. All those to whom I talked were of the opinion that EDC would be ratified sooner or later. The politicians were the most optimistic and predicted that ratification would come during January 1954. The newspaper people thought that March 1954 was the earliest date by which ratification could be expected. A few of them thought that it would not take place until July 1954.

~~CONFIDENTIAL/US OFFICIALS ONLY~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL/US OFFICIALS ONLY~~

- 2 -

6. One French politician told me that, from the personality angle, the ill health and consequent political retirement of Herriot was an exceedingly favorable factor in the EDC situation. He said that if Herriot had become president, as he might very well have done, he could certainly have delayed ratification for a considerable period and might even have prevented it altogether. He added that, lacking the prestige of the presidency, Herriot would be unable to exert enough influence to block ratification.

- end -

~~CONFIDENTIAL/US OFFICIALS ONLY~~